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WHERRY'S COMMENTARY ON THE QURAN.*

In editing this edition of Sale's Kuran, Mr. Wherry's principal object has been to number the verses as they are in the Roman Urdú edition, and to supply various emendations and additional notes, so as to serve the greater convenience of missionaries, especially missionaries in India, in arguing with Muslims, with a view to induce them to abandon Islam and embrace Christianity. The object is an excellent one, and will be of great use, when the time for its use is ripe. But then, the most of Mr. Wherry's notes and emendations should be left out.

It will never serve the cause of truth to misrepresent the opponent's side. This is precisely what Mr. Wherry does, in the most of his notes and emendations. His intense hatred of Islam, and of everything in any way connected with Islam, is such as frequently to lead him to fly right in the face of facts, and to make many astonishing blunders. He views the whole question through Anglo-Indian eyes. He takes Sir William Muir, of the Bengal Civil Service, as his infallible authority. He proclaims as facts what are suppositions with Muir. He does this while almost entirely ignoring such authorities as Lane, Burckhardt, Burton, and others, compared with whom Muir vanishes into insignificance as an authority. So bitter and unreasonable is Mr. Wherry's hostility, that it seems impossible for him to think that any good thing ever should have come, or ever can come, out of Arabia, out of Islam, out of all Arabic literature.

In his Preface, besides the old, contra-historical charge of Muhammad being an impostor, and various other charges, Mr. Wherry makes Muhammad and the Kuran to "deny almost every cardinal doctrine of the Scriptures." But the truth is precisely the reverse of this statement. Almost all of the cardinal doctrines of the Scriptures, are cardinal doctrines of the Kuran, and conversely. The Kuran cannot be adequately accounted for in any other way. One of the learned Ulama of the great University of the Azhar in Cairo, on being engaged to assist in the translation of the Westminster Catechism into Arabic, was astonished during the progress of the work, and expressed his astonishment that foreigners should know so much about divine truth (divine truth to him) as was contained in that Catechism,—as, for example, in connection with God, his existence, his attributes, the divine decrees, faith and good works, resurrection, judgment, etc. The fact about Islam is, that there is so much truth in it, and so little error in it, that, on the one hand, it is the most difficult of all forms of theology outside of the Bible to combat, while, on the other hand, it is making its thousands of converts every year from North-eastern Europe to Southern Africa.

Every candid reader and reasoner must admit that the God of Muhammad and the Kuran is the true God, identical with the God of the Bible. So Sale, who in addition thinks "that it would be a loss of time to refute those who suppose the God of Muhammad to be different from the true God." At this point Mr. Wherry has a note, in the first paragraph of which he seems to admit the above truth, while in the next he denies it. He declares "that nothing is said of God in the Quran which might not be said of a holy man." Indeed! Then Mr. Wherry has not read the Kuran. The Kuran repeatedly describes the one only true per-

* A COMPREHENSIVE COMMENTARY ON THE QURAN; comprising Sale's Translation and Preliminary Discourse, with Additional Notes and Emendations. Together with a Complete Index to the Text, Preliminary Discourse, and Notes, by the Rev. E. M. Wherry, M. A. Vols. I. and II. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

sonal God, as the Creator, Preserver, Ruler, Rewarder; the Merciful, Loving, Just, Almighty; the one who hears prayer, pardons sin, supplies all blessings, is faithful to all his words, etc. Is this a man, or the God of the Christian Scriptures? Again, Mr. Wherry objects to the Kuran's conception of God, because of "its having exalted His omnipotence over all other attributes." We fail to find the objection. The Kuran is constantly speaking of the Lord God merciful and compassionate. But supposing that the Kuran does, in a certain sense, exalt God's omnipotence over his other attributes, what then? Why, the Kuran in so doing is in harmony with the Scriptures, and Muslims in so doing are doing precisely what too many Christians fail to do. It is not God's wisdom, or mercy, or love, but specifically God's power which constitutes the basis upon which our faith stands. Again, as to the next life, Mr. Wherry seems anxious to perpetuate the false idea that the blessedness of the Muslim's heaven consists wholly in corporeal, sensual pleasures, and no spiritual blessings whatever; for he says, "We find no authority for such spiritual blessing in the Quran." And yet there is plenty of just that kind of authority in the Kuran. The Kuran teaches that the greatest blessedness of the individual in the next life will be in the experience that he is in the highest honor with God; that he shall behold God's face continually; that he shall evermore rapturously praise God,—as it says, "Their prayer therein shall be 'Praise be unto thee, O God!' and their salutation therein shall be 'Peace!' and the end of their prayer shall be 'Praise be unto God, the Lord of all creatures.'"

Besides, the facts of Muslim history and the teachings of Muslim expositors of the Kuran set forth pre-eminently the spiritual blessedness of the world to come.

In his Preliminary Discourse, Sale says of Muslims that "the generality are so addicted to the doing of good, that they extend their charity even to brutes." Whereupon Mr. Wherry makes a brief note, saying, "A few years residence among Muslims will serve to materially modify this statement." Eleven years residence among Muslims has served to modify the truth of this statement in one way only, viz., to *intensify it*. I have seen hundreds of practical proofs of the truth of this statement; proofs that were most touching in their sympathy and nobleness; proofs that would put very many Christians to shame. The Arab and his descendants deserve all the praise sung by his own poets and writers, and others, in honor of his hospitality, liberality, self-sacrificing charity.

But Mr. Wherry is not satisfied with touching upon matters of theology and religion, he must give vent to his spite against the whole Arab race in other ways and at any sacrifice,—as when he declares that, in regard to astronomy, as well as philosophical learning and medical science, we owe but very little to Arab genius. This is simply a perversion of facts, or it shows a remarkable amount of ignorance as to Arabic learning and literature, pre-Islamic and post-Islamic. Is it necessary to show again that the Arabs stood foremost in the sciences? Is it necessary to show again that, as to the sciences, the world to-day owes far more to the Arab than to any other race? Is it necessary to keep repeating over and over again the facts of history?

As to the publishers, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., a work so admirably executed by them in every particular, deserved a better hand as its editor.